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ABSTRACT

This paper describes approaches to literacy in Canadian aboriginal communities. It provides statistical data on education, employment, income, culture, language, and social issues among Canadian aboriginal people, comparing aboriginal people on and off the reserve. The statistics demonstrate issues that aboriginal literacy learners bring with them to learning situations (e.g., poverty, social bias, limited language skills, and cultural differences). They highlight the erosion of traditional aboriginal cultures and identities, which has resulted in a loss of pride in aboriginal identity. Aboriginal organizations and communities are in various stages of healing from the aftermath of a system that traditionally told them to put aside who they were and do things the mainstream way because it was best for them (via the Indian Act, the reserve system, and residential schools). Staff of First Nations Technical Institute developed a Medicine Wheel Model of Learning that uses a holistic approach and incorporates traditional aboriginal knowledge and methodologies. The greatest obstacle to implementing the holistic approach is funder criteria that focus specifically on measurable performance indicators to evaluate learner progress. However, there is medical and educational research that affirms the holistic approach. The Rainbow Approach to Literacy is a multimedia kit on aboriginal literacy that uses different colors to represent different aboriginal literacies. (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education) (SM)

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The Holistic/ Rainbow Approach to Aboriginal Literacy

Work in Progress

Priscilla George

Ningwakwe / Rainbow Woman

Chippewas of Saugeen First Nation, Ontario

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
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1. The Ontario Native Literacy Coalition (ONLC) and Program Reform

The ONLC was incorporated in 1988. Its membership comprises the twenty-eight community-based Aboriginal literacy programs funded through the Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) Unit of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU). Twelve are on First Nations, fifteen are in urban centres, and one is in a Metis community. The ONLC defines literacy thusly:

"Native literacy is a tool which empowers the spirit of Native Peoples. Native literacy services recognize and affirm the unique cultures of Native Peoples and the interconnectedness of all aspects of creation. As part of a life-long path of learning, Native literacy contributes to the development of self-knowledge and critical thinking. It is a continuum of skills that encompasses reading, writing, numeracy, speaking, good study habits, and communicating in other forms of language as needed. Based on the experience, abilities and goals of learners, Native literacy fosters and promotes achievement and a sense of purpose, which are both central to self-determination.

In 1997, the Ontario government introduced Program Reform, which defined who was eligible to attend literacy programs, what activities did or did not meet that definition, and measurable performance indicators to gauge learners' progress, and the success of programs. A significant component of Program Reform is *Working with Learning Outcomes, Validation Draft*, hereinafter referred to as the Matrix. The Matrix combines Human Resources Development Canada's Essential Skills, and the Ontario government's Common Curriculum. It also took into consideration the Canadian Language Benchmarks. The Matrix has three "domains" - Communications, Numeracy and Self-Management and Self-Direction.

Program Reform recognised the "...variety of instructional methods and learning styles...", and that it would, "...respond to the needs of the community in determine the range of services provided", and said that literacy:

> "...is the ability to read, write, calculate, speak, and understand, as well as to sign (for the Deaf) and communicate in other forms of language, according to need."

and that basic skills encompass:

> "problem-solving, decision-making, planning and organising, finding information, continuous learning, working with others, and basic computer skills".

That is, literacy is more than reading and writing. It constitutes a range of skills for improving one's quality of life. In Aboriginal communities, this is known as the **holistic approach**. Practitioners felt that certain realities within Aboriginal communities impact the design, development, delivery and evaluation of literacy programming. These were not allowed for in Program Reform or the Matrix.

2. Realities within Aboriginal Communities

"1991 Aboriginal Peoples Survey -
Schooling, Work and Related Activities, Income, Expenses and Mobility".

The first figures are national, and the bolded figures in brackets afterwards are for Ontario. There are two categories: those who identify with an Aboriginal group, and as North American Indian, on- and off-reserve.

Of the 388,900 respondents who identified with an Aboriginal group for the whole of Canada, 74,410 resided in Ontario.

EDUCATION

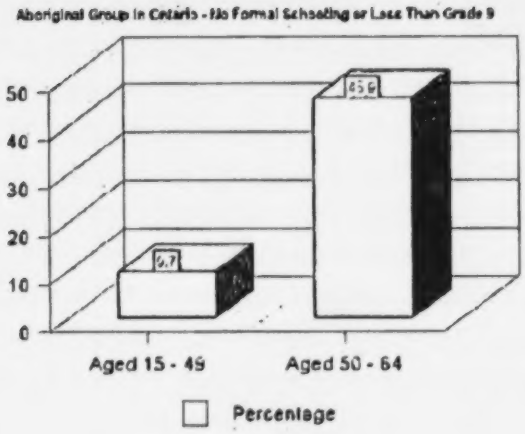
Identify with an Aboriginal Group

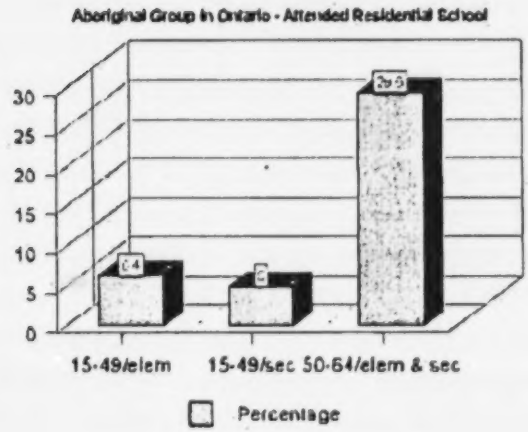
Aged 15 to 49 - 325,460 **(61,865)**

1. 17% reported no formal schooling or less than Grade 9 as their highest level of education - 6% for the total Canadian population **(9.7%);**
2. Of the 322,490 individuals who attended elementary school, 11% lived in residential schools for all or part of their elementary schooling **(6.4%);**
3. Of the 267,765 individuals who attended secondary school, 10% lived in residential schools for all or part of their secondary schooling **(5%)**

Aged 50 - 64 - 44,320 **(8,930)**

1. 53% reported no formal schooling or less than Grade 9 as their highest level of education - 26% for the total Canadian population **(41.5%)**
2. Approximately 34% reported that they lived in residential schools for all or part of their elementary and secondary schooling **(29.6%)**





Identify as North American Indian	**On-Reserve**	**Off-Reserve**
Aged 15 to 49 - 241,115 **(55,375)**	81,970 **(10,710)**	159,145 **(44,665)**
No formal schooling or < Grade 9	28% **(26.9%)**	11% **(5.8%)**
Of these, 80,640 **(10,450)** Attended elementary school - in residential schools for all or part of schooling	16% **(10.3)**	11% **(5.8%)**
Of these, 59,945 **(7,935)** Attended secondary school - in residential schools for all or part of schooling	16.0% **(8.9%)**	08.0% **(4.0%)**

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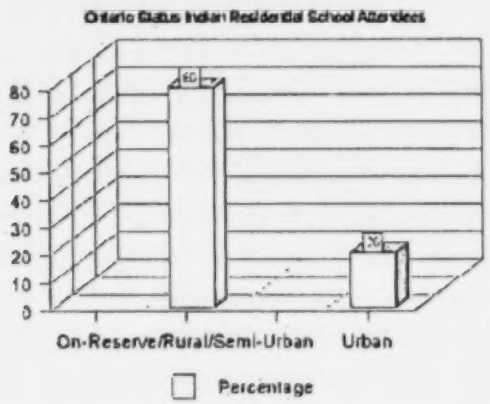
Aged 50 to 64 - 32,690 **(8,190)**	13,130 **(1,980)**	19,560 **(6,215)**
No formal schooling or < Grade 9	70.0% **(67.9%)**	44.0% **(32.7%)**
In residential school for all or part of their elementary/secondary schooling	45.0% **(32.3)**	<33.3% **(28.2%)**

Older Native learners are more likely to have no formal schooling, or less than Grade 9 as their highest level of education. They are highly more likely to have attended residential school. 80% (85,000) of attendees are Status Indians - of these:



- 80% **(68,000)** live on reserve or in rural/semi-urban areas; and,
- 20% **(17,000)** live in urban areas.

On-reserve or rural/semi-urban literacy programs are four times more likely to have learners who have been in residential school. The focus in residential schools was on the assimilation of Aboriginal students into mainstream society, rather than on academics. Empirical data indicate that boys were passed into higher grades because they were big and strong enough to handle some of the chores assigned to that level, not because they had attained the academics. Many attendees of residential schools have painful memories of abuse (verbal, physical and sexual), which can be a severe block to learning and attaining/maintaining a good quality of life. Their experiences in residential school have turned them off institutions and/or education as a whole.

According to Maggie Hodgson, Executive Director, Nechi Training, Research and Health Promotions Institute, Edmonton, Alberta, residential school attendees experienced fear, loneliness and hopelessness, which are precursors to depression. They learned to be incongruent in their social behavior, so as to avoid abuse. Such behavior contributes to confusion and

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disassociation. This behavior became generational, as residential school attendees incorporated it into their parenting styles. Disassociation manifests itself in the host of social dysfunction seen in Native communities. In her paper, "*Impact of Residential Schools and Other Root Causes of Poor Mental Health (Suicide, Family Violence, Alcohol and Drug Abuse*", Hodgson says:

> "...we have a desire to be seen and loved as we are - not as the image we have to project to be safe..."

The National Anti-Poverty Organization, 1994: p. 20-31 states::

> "Residential schools are gone now, but the legacy lives on among many Native people in the form of self-hated, substance abuse and child abuse. The damage cannot be overstated. People lost their pride, their hope, the chance to learn from Elders...Those who grew up in the schools often have frightful memories which may prevent them from getting involved today...."

EMPLOYMENT

Identify with an Aboriginal Group

Aged 15 and older

- 43% **(52%)** reported that they were employed in the week previous to the census/ 61% for the total Canadian population;
- 14% **(10.6%)** were unemployed/6% for the total Canadian population;
- Just over 59% **(61.5%)** worked for income during 1990 and/or 1991;
- 21.5% **(19.2%)** of the total Aboriginal group reported that they had difficulty finding employment because there were few or no jobs available - almost 2/3 (64%) of those who looked for work;
- 13.5% **(11.1%)** of the total Aboriginal group stated that their education or work experience did not match the available jobs - 41% **(36.8%)** of those who looked for work;
- Just over 5.3% **(3%)** of the total Aboriginal group reported that they had trouble finding a job because they were an Aboriginal person - 16% **(10.6%)** of those who looked for jobs;

Identify as North American Indian	**On-Reserve**	**Off-Reserve**
Aged 15 to 49 288,370 **(67,015)**	102,075 **(13,740)**	186,295 **(53,275)**
Employed	31% **(37.5%)**	47% **(54.2%)**

Unemployed	14% **(11.4%)**	14% **(10.3%)**
Worked for Income	49% **(52.9%)**	61% **(62.9%)**
Of these, 93,630 (**19,900**) Looked for work in 1990 and/or 1991	31,790 **(3,835)** 1/3 **(27.9%)**	61,840 **(16,065)** 1/3 **(30.2%)**
Difficulty Finding Employment Because Few or No Jobs Available	3/4 **(56.9%)**	2/3 **(64%)**
Education or Work Experience Did Not Match the Available Jobs	41% **(38.4%)**	41% **(35.6%)**
Trouble Finding a Job Because They Were an Aboriginal Person	Just over 22% **(16.6%)**	Just over 16% **(9.7%)**

For those who identify with an Aboriginal group, unemployment rates are approximately double that of the non-Aboriginal population. In Ontario, 64% of those who identify with an Aboriginal group had difficulty finding a job because none were available; for those who identified as North American Indian, 56.9% on-reserve stated this reason; as did 64% off-reserve. That is, acquisition of literacy/numeracy skills does not guarantee Aboriginal learners a job. It **MAY** assist in gaining a sense of self through furthering themselves on the continuum to independence.

According to the National Anti-Poverty Organization (NAPO) 1992 study, *Literacy and Poverty: A View from the Inside:*

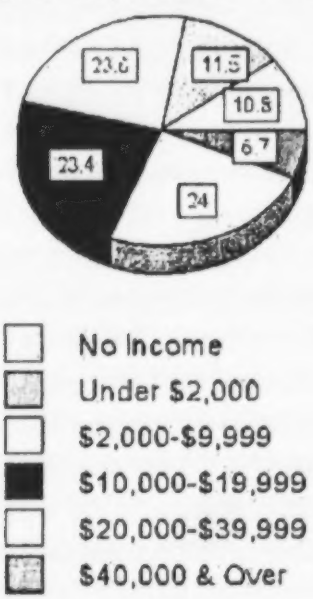
> "Low-income earners and **the long-term unemployed, Native people**...all have higher than average rates of both undereducation and poverty. They speak of the difficulties of growing up in poor disadvantaged homes, of beginning life with few opportunities. They describe how their opportunities dwindled further in schools biased against children from poor families, against people receiving social assistance, against minorities. They pinpoint their main problems today as **unemployment**, lack of money and inadequate housing – the same problems their families faced..." (highlights by the author)

INCOME

Identify with an Aboriginal Group

- 13% **(10.8%)** reported no income during 1990;
- 12% **(11.5%)** reported income of under $2,000;
- 29% **(23.6%)** reported income between $2,000 and $9,999;
- 23% **(23.4%)** reported income between $10,000 and $19,999;
- 18% **(24%)** reported income between $20,000 and $39,999;
- 5% **(6.7%)** reported income of $40,000 and over;
- 29% **(20.6%)** reported that they received social assistance during 1990. Among those who reported receiving social assistance, 65% reported that they received social assistance for more than 6 months during 1990.

Aboriginal Group in Ontario - Income Levels



Identify as North American Indian	**On-Reserve**	**Off-Reserve**
No Income during 1990	11% **(8.5%)**	14% **(11.7%)**
Income of under $2,000	18% **(20%)**	10% **(9.4%)**
Income between $2,000 - $9,999	36% **(26.6%)**	26% **(22.9%)**

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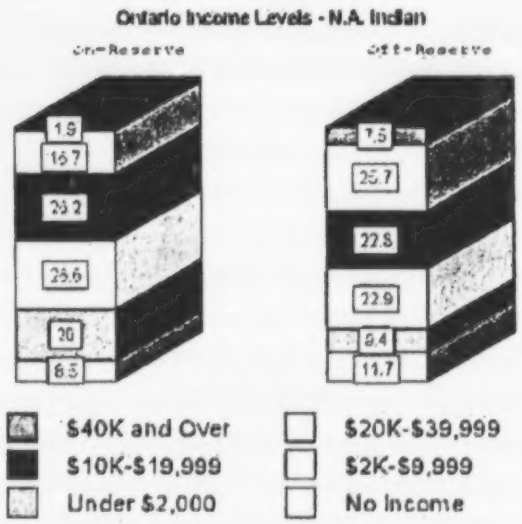
Income between $10,000 - $19,999	22% **(26.2%)**	23% **(22.8%)**
Income between $20,000 - $39,999	12% **(16.7%)**	20% **(25.7%)**
Income of $40,000 and over	2% **(1.9%)**	7% **(7.5%)**
Received Social Assistance	42% **(34.6%)**	25% **(17.7%)**

In 1991, Statistics Canada, Low Income Cut-Offs (the most widely used measure of poverty in Canada) set the poverty level at $16,511 for individuals, and $31,071 for a family of four. In Ontario, 45.9% of Native INDIVIDUALS earned less than $10,000, and 1 in 5 received social assistance.



According to NAPO Facts: Myths about Poverty:

> "...all welfare rates are well below the poverty line, and the highest rates are still 20% below; the lowest are 76% below..."
>
> "...Recent studies show strong links between poverty and poor health and poor achievement at school..."

This has major implications for Aboriginal literacy programs in that poverty and poor health produce significant blocks to learning. The Literacy Partners of Manitoba's *Demystifying Adult Literacy for Volunteer Tutors: A Reference Book and Resource Guide: written by Charlene Ball:*

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"...Literacy is usually only one of many problems for learners, with poverty, racism and other forms of systemic injustice being the greatest obstacles to a better life. [Literacy workers] saw literacy as a possible first step over these barriers, but added that these barriers themselves can block the way to literacy acquisition..."

"...Poverty produces hunger, which interferes with education because it affects one's ability to concentrate on learning..."

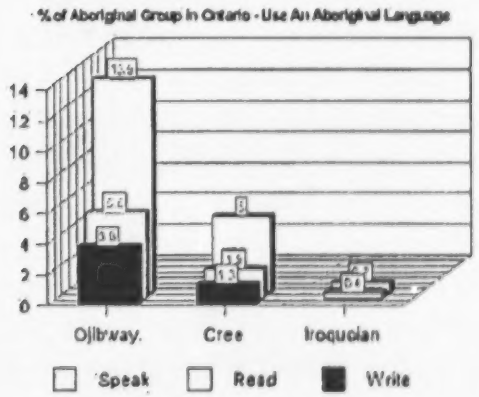
"...Poverty can cause worry, tension, stress and instability, which can make it difficult or impossible either to make time for or concentrate on studying..."

"1991 Aboriginal Peoples Survey -
Language, Tradition, Health, Lifestyle and Social Issues".

CULTURE AND LANGUAGE

- 35.8% **(21.3%)** said they spoke an Aboriginal language
- In Ontario, the breakdown of those who identify with an Aboriginal group and who reported using an Aboriginal language is as follows:

	Speaking	Reading	Writing
	15,485	6,240	4,325
	20.2%	8.4%	5.8%
Ojibway -	13.9%	5.6%	3.8%
Cree -	5.0%;	1.9%	1.3%
an Iroquoian language	0.7%.	0.4%	



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- In Ontario, those who reported speaking an Aboriginal language learned is as follows:

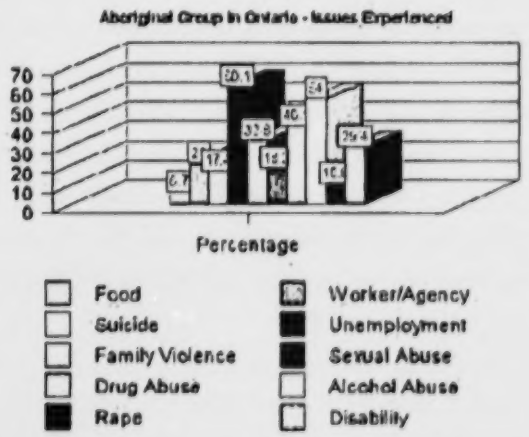
  - From their parents - 90.6%
  - From their grandparents - 65.3%
  - From Elders - 49.1%
  - From school - 13.2%
  - From someone else - 12.9%

Less than half to less than one-third of people who speak their Aboriginal language do not read it, and almost one-quarter do not write it. This has implications for Aboriginal language literacy programs, particularly given that 49.1% learned an Aboriginal language from the Elders (an important resource in literacy programs), and 12.9% learned it from someone else.

SOCIAL ISSUES

For those who identified with an Aboriginal group:

- 8.3% **(6.7%)** said the availability of food was a problem;
- 24.7% **(21%)** said their support network was a Native worker/agency;
- 24.7% **(17.4%)** had experienced a suicide;
- 67.1% **(60.1%)** had experienced unemployment;
- 39.2% **(32.8%)** had experienced family violence;
- 24.5% **(18.3%)** had experienced sexual abuse;
- 47.9% **(40.1%)** had experienced drug abuse;
- 61.1% **(54.0%)** had experienced alcohol abuse;
- 14.9% **(10.8%)** had experienced rape;
- 30.1% **(29.4%)** reported having a disability;



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3. Comments on Statistics

These are the realities in the Aboriginal community. These statistics are presented to demonstrate the issues Aboriginal literacy learners bring with them to a learning situation. However, these are symptoms of a larger concern, the erosion of culture, and thus a positive cultural identity of Aboriginal Peoples. Many factors have contributed to this erosion including, but not limited to:

- the Indian Act, along with its attendant "reserve" system; and,
- residential schools, where several generations of children were systematically removed from their birth families/communities, and punished for speaking their Aboriginal language.

The implicit message is that there is something wrong with being Aboriginal. The long-term effect has been a loss of pride in one's Aboriginal identity. Maggie Hodgson quotes Emile Durheim, a French sociologist, from his book on suicide,

> "...when you reach into a culture and pull out the values, rituals and the societal norms and you attempt to inject new values, rituals, societal norms and if you are successful, the risk you run is a society that suffers from anomie..."

Antone, Miller and Myers (*The Power Within People*, Peace Tree Technologies, Deseronto, 1986) noted that up until 8 - 10 years of age is known as a person's "Days of Decision", and that several very strong needs are met, either positively or negatively:

- to be seen
- to be heard when we communicate
- to know that our communication is accepted and believed
- to know that others have faith and trust in us
- to be allowed to take our place in the world
- to feel secure about, and at peace with one's self
- to feel that one's existence is not detrimental, but beneficial to the important people in one's life

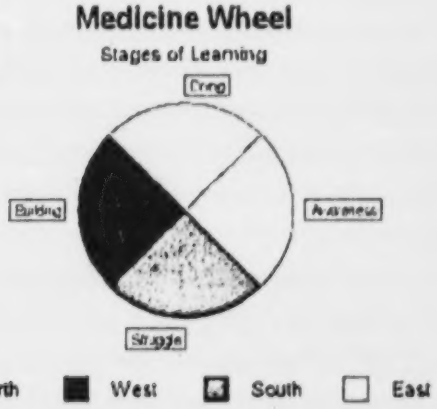
Antone et al suggest that if these needs are not met, "anomie" may result. They went on to say that "if human beings meet certain needs, they will move up a pyramid of human development until they become 'holistic' human beings - in balance with one another and the world."

Aboriginal organizations and communities are in various stages of healing from the aftermath of a system that basically said, "PUT ASIDE WHO YOU ARE, DO THINGS OUR WAY - WE KNOW WHAT'S BEST FOR YOU!". They realize that it is time to develop a framework that reflects the needs and aspirations of the Aboriginal community.

4. A Solution

Staff of First Nations Technical Institute (FNTI) have developed a Medicine Wheel Model of Learning. In *Aboriginal Access to Post-Secondary Education: Prior Learning Assessment and its Use within Aboriginal Programs of Learning*, Diane Hill describes the practices that have evolved over the last fifteen years. FNTI incorporates traditional Aboriginal knowledge and methodologies She postulates four stages to learning, as follows:

- **Awareness (Spirit - Attitudes and Insights)** - ever-increasing understanding of one's self and the world
- **Struggle (Heart - Feelings about Self and Others)** - efforts and attempts to change negative life experiences to positive patterns of feeling and believing which influence relating behaviour



- **Building (Mind - Knowledge)** - developing the new positive life experiences into continuous patterns and a view of life which includes integrating the strengths already acquired by the learner
- **Preservation (Body - Skills)** - maintaining the positive patterns and view of life as an on-going system.

That is, we are spirit, heart, mind and body. Historically, mainstream education systems focussed on the mind, and, in some cases, the body (physical education, dance..). They have not acknowledged the spirit and the heart, believing those to be the purview of the church. Aboriginal Peoples are feeling the effects of having at least 50% of themselves not being taken into consideration in the classroom. We recognize the importance of using methodologies that addresses all four elements. Our dilemma is finding a language that the funders comprehend tsee that this is a bona fide approach to literacy, and to life. In fact, Hill (p. 43) states that:

> "Humans are physical beings endowed with mind and heart (emotions) and empowered by spirit. The spirit is the force which pushes the human being to search for the meaning and purpose of one's life. All four aspects of the human being must be developed, and the

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learner must be taught to learn how to balance these energies both internally and externally within their life."

In this sense, the holistic approach to literacy is recognition and interpretation of the symbols and messages sent to us through the spirit, heart, body and mind, then acting on those messages to improve the quality of one's life.

5. Educational/Medical Research Affirming the Holistic Approach

The greatest obstacle to implementing the holistic approach is funder criteria that focuses specifically on "measurable performance indicators" to evaluate the progress of learners, and, thus, the success of literacy programs. Those indicators take into account mainly cognitive skills. In recent years, a number of initiatives recognize that cognitive and/or technical skills are only a part of the larger picture. Such initiatives include:

- Howard Gardner's work (Harvard) on Multiple Intelligences, developed "...to respect the many differences between people". Gardner recognizes eight intelligences, or ways in which people learn, process, retain and transmit information - verbal/linguistic **(mind)**, logical-mathematical **(mind)**, interpersonal **(heart)**, intrapersonal **(heart/spirit)**, spatial **(mind)**, musical **(body)**, kinesthetic **(body)** and naturalist **(body/mind/heart/spirit)**. A ninth, "existential - a concern with ultimate life issues **(heart/spirit)**" is under review **(highlights by the author)**. Only the first two are the focus of mainstream education. Educational programs worldwide are documenting the efficacy of this approach.
- Daniel Goleman's theory of Emotional Intelligences - academic/technical skills are only a foot in the door; emotional intelligence **(heart)** is the master aptitude. He theorizes an Emotional Competence Framework.

Goleman postulates "emotional hijacking", in which moments of emotional arousal are imprinted in the part of the brain known as the amygdala:

"...the more intense the arousal, the stronger the imprint...its method of comparison is associative...When one key element of a present situation is similar to the past, it can call it a "match" - which is why this circuit is sloppy: it acts before there is full confirmation. It frantically commands that we react to the present in ways that were imprinted long ago, with thoughts, emotions, reactions learned in response to events perhaps only dimly similar, but close enough to alarm the amygdala." (p. 21, *Emotional Intelligence*, Bantam Books, New York, 1997)

Candace Pert, Ph. D., *Molecules of Emotion*, Scribner, New York, 1997 hypothesizes the "bodymind":

> The body is the unconscious mind! Repressed traumas caused by overwhelming emotion can be stored in a body part, thereafter affecting our ability to feel that part of even move it. The new work suggests there are almost infinite pathways for the conscious mind to access - and modify - the unconscious mind and the body, and also provides an explanation for a number of phenomena that the emotional theorists have been considering. (P. 141)

Mona Lisa Schulz, M.D., Ph. D., *Awakening Intuition: Using your Mind-Body Network for Insight and Healing*, Harmony Books, New York, 1998, says:

> "...When an experience is painful or trauma tizing, however, the hippocampus is unable to encode it because it's suppressed by stress hormones released by the brain and body. That's when the amygdala, another area in the temporal lobe, steps in and takes over, encoding the experience as a nonverbal memory, or one that can't be expressed easily in words. The memory is stored in body memory. You may not consciously recollect it, but it still lives in your brain and the tissues of your body. (P. 87)

That is, Aboriginal learners who have experienced trauma are likely to have memories storied in their bodies, memories of which they are unaware. The amygdala will make a sloppy association when something in the present situation that remotely resembles the past traumatic event. The learners "freeze", dissociate, and may not even know why. In fact, Armstrong (*Multiple Intelligences in the Classroom*, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Alexandria, Virginia, 2000) refers to these as "paralyzing experiences." There is a biochemical basis for this; it's not simply a matter of "pulling up your bootstraps".

Goleman, Pert and Schulz detail literacy-based and literacy-related ways of working with such incidents. Goleman suggests emotional relearning - for adults, reconstructing the story of the trauma in a harbor of safety, allowing the emotional circuitry to acquire a new, more realistic understanding of and response to the traumatic memory and its triggers; artwork. He suggests schooling the emotions, also known as Self-Science. Aboriginal literacy practitioners know this as Lifeskills (which in most jurisdictions is not recognized as a bona fide literacy activity). Pert advocates becoming conscious of the bodymind conversation (e.g., stomach difficulties say that there's something in your life you can't stomach"), tapping into dreams (dream-journalling); eating wisely (studying nutrition). Schulz advances learning body language, the meaning of health and disease; and, fostering intuitive intelligence **(spirit)**.

Paul Pearsall, Ph. D., *The Heart's Code*, Broadway Books, New York 1998, makes a case for the heart as the seat of the mind and soul. His advice is to:

> "...listen for what your heart is telling you about living, loving, and working. Try to store your lessons as cellular memories for later recall at the stressful times in your life." (P. 159)

Pearsall's work is corroborated by *The HeartMath Solution*, HarperSanFrancisco, 1999 that says:

> "...the heart is the control tower of the body's systems..."

The HeartMath Institute has developed heart-centred techniques for:

> "... improving achievement-related skills, attitudes and emotional self-management."

In fact, there is a whole network of educators worldwide who believe in educating for human development. They call themselves GATE (Global Alliance for Transforming Education), and, in

1991, produced *Education 2000: A Holistic Perspective*, which is a statement of what education should - and could - be like.

6. The Rainbow Approach to Literacy

In 1996, the author developed the Rainbow Approach to Literacy for a project sponsored by the Parkland Regional College, Yorkton, Saskatchewan, entitled "*Reaching the Rainbow*". Aboriginal literacy practitioners from across Canada collaborated in the production of a multi-media kit on Aboriginal literacy. Consensus was that, in fact, there are Aboriginal literacies. The committee decided to use the rainbow, and to have each colour represent a different type of literacy.

Two years later, the National Aboriginal Design Committee (NADC) adapted the Rainbow Approach to Aboriginal Literacy for its logo and its vision. The NADC oversaw the first ever in Canada National Aboriginal Literacy Gathering (NALG), and is developing a NALG Follow-up Strategy, which includes more NALGs, and a national Aboriginal literacy organization. This adapted version was included in the NALG Participant Kits and, to date, literacy organizations across Canada are requesting workshops. The author, with NALG participants, is documenting actual literacy initiatives, noting how these activities nurture and develop the spirit, heart, mind and body. For the purposes of this presentation, she will present an exemplary model for each colour, and ask Lens on Literacy participants to suggest others.

THE RAINBOW APPROACH TO LITERACY

Red - the colour understood by some Aboriginal cultures to signify the life-force (bloodstream) of humans and animals. It can mean confidence, which has within it the knowing, the ability to plan, to start a process. Red has been used to denote the First Peoples of Canada. Red represents the **language of origin of First Nations individuals and/or communities.**

Awareness - Spirit (Attitude/Insight) - Aboriginal languages are descriptive, show the interconnectedness of life, embody and transmit the culture.

Struggle - Heart (Feelings about Self/Others) - A significant number of Aboriginal Peoples do not know their language of origin. They would like to learn about themselves, and their own culture.

Building - Mind (Knowledge) - Many Aboriginal literacy programs have first language components. Some northern programs are bilingual, and use learners' syllabic skills to help them to acquire literacy in English.

Preservation - Body (Skill) - Learners are recovering the "old" words, producing activity booklets, and are participating in ceremonies using the language.

Orange - the colour understood by some Aboriginal cultures to mean balance, the place of choice where we are taught to exercise self-confidence, self-assuredness, self-control and self-esteem, in order to keep emotions, such as fear, in balance. Orange is used to denote fire. The first source of fire is the Sun, which is the centre of the universe. People are considered to be like the universe, in that they also have a centre, a fire within. For Aboriginal Peoples, that centre is the teachings. Aboriginal teachings have been passed from generation to generation orally. Orange symbolizes **oral literacy** (speaking, listening...);

Awareness - Spirit (Attitude/Insight) - Prior to contact, Aboriginal Peoples had an oral tradition.

Struggle - Heart (Feelings about Self/Others) - When I hear others speak, I actively listen, I relate, I learn, I have more knowledge.

Building - Mind (Knowledge) - Each and every moment, I acquire more knowledge through listening and/or speaking.

Preservation - Body (Skill) - I can listen and speak to others to enhance my knowledge and options.

Yellow - the colour used in reference to the moon, and the gathering of food (in Aboriginal tradition, crops are planted and harvested according to the phases of the moon). Some Aboriginal cultures understand yellow to mean creativity. Yellow refers to the creative means by **which Aboriginal people learned to communicate with others who spoke another language, by**

using symbols (pictographs, and in contemporary times, artwork, music...) and/or sign language.

Awareness - Spirit (Attitude/Insight) - The written word is only one way to communicate.

Struggle - Heart (Feelings about Self/Others) - I feel more comfortable expressing myself another way.

Building - Mind (Knowledge) - When I need or feel clarity/centredness, I can (draw, make music...)

Preservation - Body (Skill) - I create to express myself and to enhance my surroundings.

Green - is interpreted to mean growth, going beyond what is familiar, yet remaining true to the teachings. This allows us to live with respect and humbleness. Green represents grass and growing things on Mother Earth. Treaties and understandings with the newcomers often included the phrase, "*as long as the grasses grow and the rivers flow*". Green refers to **literacy in the languages of the European newcomers to this land several hundred years ago, English and/or French, which are recognized as Canada's official languages;**

Awareness - Spirit (Attitude/Insight) - We live in a multi-cultural, multi-lingual society.

Struggle - Heart (Feelings about Self/Others) - I can learn other languages to give me more choices in life, but I do not have to give up my own.

Building - Mind (Knowledge) - What I learn about other languages and cultures reinforces my own.

Preservation - Body (Skill) - I can teach myself and others through another language.

Blue - which some Aboriginal cultures understand to mean truth. Knowing the truth means staying true to your vision, where commitment is most important. Blue symbolizes the sky. With the coming of the Europeans, the skyline changed, and now contains the tools of technology, towers and satellite dishes that send and receive signals. Blue refers to **the skills required to communicate using technology.**

Awareness - Spirit (Attitude/Insight) - Technology is a large part of everyday life.

Struggle - Heart (Feelings about Self/Others) - Technology is confusing; however, if I don't learn how to use it, I may miss out on something.

Building - Mind (Knowledge) - I can learn the basics, and build from there.

Preservation - Body (Skill) - I can connect to a larger world through technology.

Indigo - refers to the night-time sky, the dream time, when Aboriginal peoples are more open to receiving messages from the Spirit World. This colour refers to the "third eye chakra", which means "spiritual seeing". Indigo means **the skills required for spiritual or cultural literacy - the ability to interpret natural things, which are seen to be messages from the Spirit World - the sighting of an animal, the shape of a cloud, seeing a certain person at a particular point in time, etc.**

Awareness - Spirit (Attitude/Insight) - There are realities beyond those we can perceive through our five senses.

Struggle - Heart (Feelings about Self/Others) - I often sense or "know" things without knowing how or why.

Building - Mind (Knowldge) - I learn to interpret symbols and events.

Preservation - Body (Skill) - I can find the growth lesson in any event.

Violet - is thought to be a healing colour. Some Aboriginal cultures understand purple to mean wisdom, the ability to understand things, to have true power (inner and spiritual), to respect, and to know in a holistic way. Violet refers to **the holistic base to Aboriginal literacy - dealing with spiritual, emotional, mental and physical learning outcomes - striving for balance.**

Awareness - Spirit (Attitude/Insight) - I am spirit, heart, mind and body.

Struggle - Heart (Feelings about Self/Others) - I feel more centred/balanced when I look after my spirit, heart, mind and body.

Building - Mind (Knowledge) - I know what activities nurture my spirit, heart, mind and body.

Preservation - Body (Skill) - I regularly review what I'm doing to take care of my spirit, heart, mind and body.

Aboriginal literacy practitioners continually seek ways to nurture the spirit, heart, mind and body - for themselves, and for the learner. They provide a welcoming environment (they do not replicate the educational institutions, the system that did not work in the first place), and treat the learner as a whole person, an individual with skills and strengths that he/she may not yet have recognized. Practitioners develop an "invitational approach to literacy" - a phrase coined by William Purkey and John Novak (1984), "the process by which people are cordially summoned to realize their relatively boundless potential".

Red - Joanne Boyer, Mississauga # 8 First Nation, Ontario - doing Aboriginal language literacy using an experiential approach, drawing on the strengths/interests/needs of the learners. One learner explained to the others how to tan hides (speak and listen effectively). They flip-charted the words in English and Ojibway. Then they went out to do the activity. Joanne took pictures of the process, then learners wrote their stories (write clearly to express ideas), and read them to each other (read with understanding for various purposes).

Orange - Lynne McLeod, Pine Grove Correctional Centre, Prince Albert, Saskatchewan - doing Family Literacy with female inmates, using the Talking Circle (speak and listen effectively) as the foundation to identifying issues for inclusion in story books for their children (write clearly to express ideas).

Yellow - Helen McPhaden, Stardale Women's Group Inc. Foundation, Melfort, Saskatchewan - doing Life Skills with Aboriginal women to establish foundation for identifying issues (speak and listen effectively), then teaching the women art, quilt-making, pottery-making, and weaving to express themselves.

Green - Larry Loyie and Constance Brissenden, Living Traditions Inc., Vancouver, British Columbia - a former learner now facilitating Writing Workshops for Learners all across Canada (speak and listen effectively), teaching them to write their own stories (write clearly to express ideas).

Blue - Christianna Jones, AlphaRoute, West Bay First Nation, Ontario - developing on-line literacy activities using the Medicine Wheel Approach to enhance the Self-Management and Self-Direction Domain of the Ontario Learning Outcomes Matrix. Learners read the content (read with understanding for various purposes), then complete the writing exercises (write clearly to express ideas). Many of the activities teach them to reflect on their lives.

Indigo - Jacquie Labonte, Niagara Regional Native Centre - giving learners the option of participating in the weekly Sweatlodge Ceremonies which she conducts. Participants learn to interpret things and events symbolically. Some do reflective journals (write clearly to express ideas), line drawings, or talk about how they apply the teachings to their lives (speak and listen effectively).

Violet - Outline approaches that provide a welcoming atmosphere, where self-exploration is encouraged, and a sense of self is developed.

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